

To his Highness the Lord Protector,
and the Parliament of England, &c.

Mortal Gods,

Samuel Chidley

THe Eternal Being, without which nothing can be, hath made of one blood all nations of men *Act. 17. 26.* Men are the offspring of God, *v. 29* and made in his own image, *Gen. 1. 23.* and therefore God said unto our father soon after the flood, *Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed, Gen. 9. 6.* Yea, (except in some special cases) blood must be shed for the blood of a thief: for he should have lived to make full restitution, *Exo. 22. 3.* And therefore you ought to be more tender of a mans life, then of matter of estate: and all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, ye should do even so to them, *Mat. 7. 12.* And I have so much charity towards you, to hope that you are not void of all humanity, but have some natural affection; so that if any of your children or neer relations through poverty should fall to steal, and happen to be hanged for the value of *13 d. ob* (or press'd to death for not speaking) it would touch you to the quick. And think you that other mens children and relations are not as dear and precious to them, as yours are to you? And this I say, not that I allow of theft, nor do I know any of my relations guilty thereof; but only shew unto you the unnaturalness of the act and fact of putting men to death for simple Theft; that so you may be thoroughly sensible and sorrowful, and *your hearts may be made better, Eccl. 7. 3.* You know it's a common thing to arraign men for stealing Horses; a man is hang'd ordinarily for a Mare: for your Law values not a man more then a horse: Is not this a brutish estimation, O ye Heads of Great Britain?

You have sate now above these 40 days twice told,

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and passed some Acts for transporting Corn and Cattel out of the Land, and against *Charles Stuart's*, &c. but (as I humbly conceive) have left undone matters of greater concernment, amongst which, the not curbing this over-much justice in hanging men for Stealing. is one; the not suppressing the Pressing of men to death for not answering against themselves, is another: And what think you of taking away a mans life upon a single testimony, (especially being for such small matters) can you justify the same before the great Law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy? If you cannot, then be as diligent to make a thorow Reformation, as I have been in importunate Sollicitation.

Wot ye not also, that it is a general grievance and open disgrace to the Nation, that the Publick debts are yet unpaid, although you are deeply engaged by *Art. 39.* of this present Government? Ye know the Laws are executed with great severity against Pick-pockets, petty thieves, and silent malefactors, who are press'd to death for holding their tongues, and are taken *pro confesso*: But judg in your selves, Whether are the greater sinners, those who steal for meer necessity, to supply their present wants, or such as defraud the old soldier of his Pay, & the laborer of his hire, and borrow money and not pay again, but engage faith and promise upon it, give Debenters, Bills and Bonds for it, and establish Securities to satisfy it, and afterwards by force or fraud take it, or suffer it to be taken away again, and yet again binde themselves by a solemn Oath, as in the presence of God, that the Securities given shall remain firm and good, and not be made void or invalid upon any pretence whatsoever, and afterwards neither regard debts nor debtors, but suffer many of them to perish, while justice is bought and sold, and cometh by a drop at a time, and doth not
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down as it ought like a mighty stream: And by swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, men break out, and blood toucheth blood. And for these things doth the land mourn, Hos. 4. 2, 3.

In the land of *Israel* there was special provision made for the poor, the fatherless and the widow, yea, the very stranger was not to be forgotten in that land: so that Theft was much more to be punished than now, such the Thieves then were not driven to such straits and calamities as many now have been, and are still here in *England*, (under such rude Forms of Government) by casualties, as impotency of body, loss of estates, bad debts, like the Publick faith and Arreres of souldiers, so much undervalued, as if the High & Mighty States of *England* were broken. And God then gave free liberty amongst the Jews, for a man to eat his fill of his neighbours field, vineyard, or oliveyard: but by the rustical law of *England*, men arrest men as trespassers for coming upon their ground, and obtain Judgements against them for Costs, although there is no damage. Such practices as these disquiet the Land, create combustions, bring confusions, and procure work for a sort of Villains called Catchpoles, and employ a company of lascivious Lubbers, I mean the lying Lawyers, whose heads are full of mischief, and their pens dipt in gall and wormwood; their tongues are as sharp arrows, their teeth as swords and spears, and their throats open sepulchres, to devour and swallow up the poor and needy from amongst men: These are like a sweeping rain to the poor, not leaving them a shilling to be a shield of defence, nor a peny in their pocket, to encounter with their enemy Hunger: and so the poor mens noses are held to the Grindstone, and their faces ground away, as may be seen by their countenances: and the Poor's poverty comes to be
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their absolute destruction, and swarms of beggers and thieves ingendered in the Common wealth by Pecuniarians: and the poor mans Suit cannot go on currantly without money, though his Cause be never so just; but I suppose a Lawyer may easily be got to speak twenty lyes against him for 10 s. and cloak his lyes with pretences of Clyents informations. These things may easily be reformed by you, if ye will, O ye men of high degree.

And because you are the Patrons of *Englands* Statutes, and have power to redress the Grievances which by your Law cannot be redressed without you; I have presented you with these lines printed in red letters, because, though *Tophet is prepared of old for Kings*; because of their crying crimes, yet Parliaments sins are sins red as scarlet, of a deep and double dye; and they must be accountable to him by whom their Legislative power is limited. Repent therefore, O Parliament of *England*, and be not as your predecessors the former Parliaments. Parliaments have been Pillars of Popery, Panders to the Whore of *Babylon*, abominable Idolators, propagators of Adultery and Coverousness in the Clergie: Parliaments have been Murderers of Saints and sinners; Parliaments have done and undone their self-denying Ordinances, been puff'd up with pride, tyrannous towards their inferiours, slavish to their superiours, submitting to force against freedom; using public fraud and private flattery, to the destruction of the people. Therefore whatsoever *beavie burdens* they bound, and *grievous to be born*, you must unbinde, loosing the bands of wickedness, undoing the heavy burdens, and letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke, so much as the putting forth of the finger, or speaking vanity.